(d) what are the reasons for this delay and by when the cases are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 135 such applications are pending with the Department of Company Affairs.

(c) and (d) Nidhi companies required improved regulatory framework to strengthen their functioning and also to instil confidence in the minds of the investors. Hence, a Committee of Experts was established on 23.3.2000 to suggest suitable changes. This Committee submitted its Report In September 2000 and thereafter necessary changes were notified in July 2001. The Notifications prescribing the supervisory framework and prudential norms, on the pattern of Non-Banking Financial Companies, were later revised in April, 2002 at the instance of Chamber of Nidhis and Federation of Benefit Funds. The processing of pending applications has been taken up in the light of the these revised Notifications.

Income Tax payers in the country

1309. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be phased to state:

(a) the total number of tax payers in the category of salaried class/ professionals/private Ltd. companies/public Ltd. enterprises including banks and financial institutions in the country;

(b) what is the total tax collected from them, category-wise:

(c) what are the tax arrears from these tax payers; and

(d) what steps are being taken to recover the arrears of tax dues from them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) to (c) Statistics showing status-wise break up of tax payers, their tax arrears and total tax collected from them category wise is not maintained. However, the following figures are available:—

(As on 31.12.2002)	
Total No. of Taxpayers	316.88 lakhs
Total Tax collected	Rs. 53,498.81 crores
Total Tax arrears	Rs. 62,775.19 crores

(d) The recovery of outstanding tax arrears is a continuous process involving attachment of bank accouts, levy of penalty, use of coercive measures such as attachment and sale of movable and immovable properties, arrest of defaulters, etc.

High priority is accorded to the area of recovery of taxes. Periodical reviews and monitoring of high demand cases are made by higher authorities on a continuous basis and necessary instructions are issued from time to time for effecting recovery of tax arrears.

Violation of postal rules by ICICI Bank

1310. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that financial institutions like ICICI Bank are violating postal rules by sending their interest and redemption cheques of high value, even of more than Rupees ten thousand by ordinary post thereby putting the investors to undue risk and also deperiving the postal department of revenue; and

(b) if so, the action proposed to be taken by Government to ensure the compliance of postal rules by the financial institutions in such matters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) ICICI Bank has informed that they do not send by ordinary post the interest and redemption cheques of more than Rs. 10000/-. Cheques of a value exceeding Rs. 10,000/- are sent either under certificate of posting or through registered post. The procedures followed by ICICI Bank is in accordance with industry practice as well.

(b) Does not arise.